

Amon Bronson House  
263 South Plymouth Avenue  
Rochester  
Monroe County  
New York

HABS No. NY-5662

HABS  
NY,  
28-ROCH,  
35-

PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D.C. 20240

## AMON BRONSON HOUSE

Page 1  
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Location: 263 South Plymouth Avenue, at the southwest corner of Atkinson Street, Rochester, Monroe County, New York

Present Owner: John L. Beattie, Jr., 49 Shoreham Drive, Rochester

Present Occupants: Tenants

Present Use: Multiple residence

Statement of Significance: The elegant bow front of this Greek Revival residence represents the culmination of sophistication in the development of this style in Rochester's architecturally significant Third Ward Historic District.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

## A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1848.
2. Architect: Unknown.
3. Original and subsequent owners: "... part of lot fifty-two in township one short range ... known on a map and survey as subdivision lots seven, eight and nine, in lot fifty-two, and so much of lots twenty-two and twenty-three to be eighty feet on Sophia Street (now South Plymouth Avenue) and ten rods in depth ..."

1844 Deed, May 11, 1844, Book 65, p. 519.  
From: William Kidd and Eleanor E., his wife.  
To: Amon Bronson, Sr.  
For: \$2,000.00.

1876 Will, file number 39.  
The will of Amon Bronson named his wife as sole executrix. She died in 1878. The two children then inherited the property. The following conveyance is the quitclaim to his half of the property by Amon Bronson, Jr., to his sister.

1879 Deed, March 25, 1879, Book 322, p. 87.  
From: Amon Bronson, Jr.  
To: Charles Babcock and Linda Bronson Babcock, his wife.

1915 Deed, by will of January 26, 1915, June 11, 1925, Book 1324, p. 195.

From: Charles H. Babcock.

To: Elizabeth Holden Babcock, his second wife.

Upon her death the entire estate was to pass to Amon Bronson, Jr.

1915 Deed, August 2, 1915, Book 968, p. 268.

From: Amon Bronson, Jr.

To: George H. Clark.

The property as described was sold twice before the purchase by John Beattie in the early 1970's.

4. Builder or contractor: Since Bronson was a prosperous lumber dealer, it may be assumed that he provided some building materials for the house.
5. Original plans: None known.
6. Alterations and additions: Dates of alterations and additions are not known, but it appears that there may have been a rear addition. It also appears that in order to accommodate the eleven apartments that some interior walls have been moved, and exterior openings inserted. There has been some alteration to the base of what appears to have been a full cupola. Today only a small glassed cabin is perched on the rectangular base. At one time shutters were present as windows on the east and south have the pintles still in place.

B. Historical Events Connected with the Structure:

Amon Bronson established the first lumber yard in Rochester in 1832. He was an active leader in the politics of the historic Third Ward. Prior to the Civil War, this prominent Democrat was a Third Ward Alderman, and Ward Supervisor, 1859-1867. As a Republican, he was defeated for the United States Senate in 1865. This house was owned by Bronson heirs until 1915.

C. Sources of Information:

1. Bibliography:

a. Primary and unpublished sources:

Deeds, Office of Monroe County Clerk.

Wills, Surrogate's Court, Hall of Justice.

b. Secondary and published sources:

McIntosh, Prof. W. H. History of Monroe County, New York. Philadelphia: Everts, Ensign and Everts, 1876.

Rochester Historical Society Publication Fund Series.  
Vol. VI, 1927.

Schmidt, Carl and Ann. Architecture and Architects of Rochester, N. Y. Rochester: Rochester Society of Architects, 1959.

2. Likely sources not yet investigated: None known.

Prepared by Kevin Patrick Harrington  
Society for the Preservation  
of Landmarks in  
Western New York  
December, 1966

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: This fine bow-fronted house illustrates refinements in exterior and interior detailing which became part of the later development of the Greek Revival style.
2. Condition of fabric: The structure has received reasonable maintenance.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: Forty-five feet by seventy feet; three bay front by twelve bays; two stories; rectangular with two stepped rear sections.
2. Foundations: Elevated, cement-covered stone foundations are finished to form a plain water table.
3. Wall construction: The natural finished red brick walls have wood and stone trim.
4. Structural system: The masonry walls are load bearing.

5. Chimneys: There are six interior brick chimneys with molded caps. The chimney at the northwest corner has a rounded metal hood.
6. Openings:
  - a. Doorways and doors: The main east entrance consists of a single paneled, leaded glass door framed by a rectangular toplight and narrow sidelights. The door and sidelights are flanked by engaged colonnettes with finely carved Corinthian capitals. All are set on block bases and support a slightly projecting, molded architrave. The south and north sides each have two exterior entrances.
  - b. Windows and shutters: All first floor windows have double hung, six over six light sashes. All second floor windows have double hung, three over six light sashes. All windows have stone lintels and slightly projecting stone sills. The center bay, second floor window is set in a modified Palladian composition. Windows in the second bay, north facade, are false. They correspond to the interior chimney. The window openings are fitted with permanent louvred shutters.
7. Roof: The slightly hipped roof of the east section has a rectangular base of a cupola which has a molded cornice and a small rectangular opening per side. A small paneled and glassed cabin now is centered on the base. The roofs are covered with seamed tin, and finished with boxed eaves below which runs a wide, continuous, unadorned frieze.
8. Porches, stoops, bulkheads: The main east entrance is protected by rectangular, flat roofed projecting frieze and architrave supported by two fluted columns with carved Corinthian-type capitals. The roof is finished by a paneled parapet with corner blocks. Elaborately carved console brackets flanking the door composition receive the attached architrave. A similar projecting frieze and architrave unit, located on the north side, is supported by three fluted Doric columns. It has a flat roof with projecting eaves. The first floor north rear entrance is reached by four cement steps with iron handrails. A metal fire escape provides access to the north second floor entrance. A covered stoop of five cement steps is located in the center of the south side. The south rear entrance is

approached by five brick steps.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plan: The original center entrance hall with stairway to the right has been altered by the enclosing of the stairway. Two main parlors are located to the left and right of the entrance. All other corridors have been removed to accommodate the eleven apartments.
2. Stairways: The main straight run stairway has two turned balusters per step, a turned newel, and molded handrail. An enclosed stairway at the west rear extends from the first floor to the basement.
3. Flooring: All rooms have hardwood floors.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: All walls and ceilings are plastered, painted or papered. In some rooms original cove molded cornices and high baseboards remain. First floor windows have wood panels set below.
5. Doorways and doors: The four panel doors of the first floor are set in deeply molded, eared doorways. Doorways in the east section are topped by narrow molded cornices.
6. Special decorative features: The northeast and southeast parlors have elaborate painted plaster ceilings with Rococo-like relief designs. Stylistically, these designs are of a later date than the house. The ceiling is bordered by a compound molded cornice which is finished by a molded frieze decorated with a raised, running garland. The entrance hall contains a partially free-standing arched doorway composition which is awkwardly fitted into the ceiling molding and enclosed stairway. A carved keystone flanked by low relief spandrel panels is set in an arch carried by a pilaster on the right and a pier on the left.
7. Hardware: None of note.
8. Mechanical equipment:
  - a. Heating: The hot water heating system is supplied by a Mills Water Tube Boiler from B. S. Smith Co., Westfield, Massachusetts.
  - b. Lighting: Although no original fixtures remain, the

hall and northeast parlor chandeliers are good examples of forms of the third quarter of the century.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: The house faces east at the corner of South Plymouth Avenue and Atkinson Street. Plymouth Avenue is the main street in the Third Ward.
2. Historic landscape design: A simple wrought iron fence set in a stone base marks the corner of the property on the east and north.
3. Outbuildings: A center gabled, stone, two and one-half story garage or carriage house is located to the immediate west of the house.
4. Walks: Straight, cement walks approach the east entrance and main north entrance.

Prepared by Amy Hecker  
Society For the Preservation of Landmarks in Western  
New York  
January, 1974

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

This recording project of twenty-six selections of historical and architecturally significant Rochester structures was undertaken in 1966, by the Society for the Preservation of Landmarks in Western New York, Inc., Mrs. Patrick Harrington, Executive Director, in cooperation with the Historic American Buildings Survey, James C. Massey, Chief. The project was under the general direction of John Poppeliers, Senior Historian. Architectural and historical descriptions were contributed by the Society for the Preservation of Landmarks in Western New York, Inc. General photographic documentation was undertaken by Hans Padelt, Senior Engineer, Graflex, on a contractual basis with the Historic American Buildings Survey. The final documentation and editing was done by Susan R. Slade in 1978, for transmittal to the Library of Congress and the impending publication of the Historic American Buildings Survey New York State catalogue.